

We get a lot of questions in our office about screen time, especially what is a HEALTHY amount of screen time for kids? We like to refer parents to the recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics on how the quality and quantity of screen time can affect your child.

As a society, we are more connected to our screens than ever before. Kids born today will not know a time without smartphones and digital media. It is our job to teach them safe digital habits. Media can influence how children and teens feel, learn, think and behave. This is why it is important to understand the risks and benefits of digital media use and how to maintain a balance for your family.

Media Use Guidelines Based on Age

AGE	DESCRIPTION	MEDIA USE GUIDELINES
Younger than 2 years old	<p>Children younger than 2 learn and grow when they explore the physical world around them. Their minds learn best when they interact and play with parents, siblings, caregivers, and other children and adults.</p> <p>Children younger than 2 have a hard time understanding what they see on screen media and how it relates to the world around them.</p> <p>However, children 18–24 months of age can learn from high-quality educational media, IF their parents play or view with them and reteach the lessons.</p>	<p>Media use should be very limited and only when an adult is standing by to co-view, talk, and teach (for example, video chatting with family along with parents).</p> <p>For children 18–24 months, if you want to introduce digital media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose high-quality programming. Use media together with your child. Avoid solo media use.
2 to 5 years of age	At 2 years of age, many children can understand and learn words from live video chatting. Young children can listen to or join a conversation with their	<p>Limit screen use to no more than 1 hour per day.</p> <p>Find other activities for your children to do</p>

	<p>parents.</p> <p>Children 3–5 years of age have more mature minds, so a well-designed educational program such as Sesame Street (in moderation) can help children learn social, language, and reading skills.</p>	<p>that are healthy for their bodies and minds.</p> <p>Choose media that is interactive, nonviolent, educational, and pro-social.</p> <p>Co-view or co-play with your children.</p>
5 years & older	<p>Today's grade-schoolers and teens are growing up immersed in digital media. They may even have their own mobile device and other devices to access digital media.</p>	<p>Make sure media use is not displacing other important activities, such as sleep, family time, and exercise.</p> <p>Check your children's media use for their health and safety.</p>
Tweens & Teens	<p>Tweens and teens are more likely to have some independence in what they choose and watch, and they may be consuming media without parental oversight.</p>	<p>Parents should engage tweens and teens in conversations about their media use, digital citizenship, what they've seen or read, who they are communicating with, and what they have learned from their media use.</p>

Negative effects of too much digital media for children and teens can lead to:

- **Not enough sleep:** Kids who have too much media, or have screens in their room fall asleep later, and sleep less.
- **Increases in childhood obesity:** Kids who overuse media tend to overeat, and are less likely to be active with healthy physical play.
- **Delays in learning & social skills:** Infants/preschoolers who have too much digital media, can show delays in attention, thinking, language and social skills. Parents who keep digital media on (or spend excess time on their own devices) miss opportunities to interact with their children.
- **Negative effect on school performance:** Children and teens often multitask when they are doing school work. This can have a negative impact on their learning.

- **Behavior problems:** Violent content on screens can contribute to behavior issues as children can be confused and try to mimic what they see on screens.
- **Problematic Internet Use:** Children are at risk for developing this type of addictive behavior. When they spend most of their free time online and are less interested in real-life relationships, there can be an increased risk of mental health disorders.
- **Risky behaviors:** teens that do not have limitations to digital media use can develop risky behaviors such as substance use, sexual behaviors, self injury or eating disorders.

If you or your family have any questions about digital media use, please do not hesitate to reach out to us!

American Academy of Pediatrics, Healthy Children. "Constantly Connected: How Media Use Can Affect Your Child"